

*Item 5
p. 69-19
Michael Nakasone*

To: Honolulu City Council
Subject: Confirmation Hearing
Bandmaster: Michael Nakasone

RECEIVED

FEB 12 12 26 PM '09

CITY CLERK
HONOLULU, HAWAII

Chair Todd K. Apo
Council members: Nestor R. Garcia
Barbara Marshall
Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Charles Djou
Duke Bainum
Rod Tam
Romy M. Cachola
Gary H. Okino

Aloha Kakou,

My name is Dennis Ka'imi Keohokalole and I am testifying on behalf of our current bandmaster of the Royal Hawaiian Band, Mr. Michael Nakasone in hopes that he would be re-confirmed to his current position. I have had the privilege and honor to be a participant with the band as a member of the mens Glee Club working with Mr. Nakasone and his staff. At first, I had some reservations about him because of his ethnicity and why a person of his caliber would want to be involved with a position that could be controversial as

much as political. And then again, one would need to be able to assume responsibilities and meet the criteria for this job. It made me feel somewhat awkward and offensive. Why? Because I felt I'm hawaiian, not any hawaiian. I am a descendant of our Queen Lili'uokalani, and thought, what does this guy know about things hawaiian, history, culture, etc. In fact, after I got to know him, did I realize how prejudice I was towards him, not giving him a chance to try and fulfill his position the best way he knew how. He apparently did his homework researching and acquiring lots of important information not only from the archives, and libraries, but also information that we shared with him about the queen and our family. That only happened after one of his coordinators, an exquisite entertainer, director, writer who is well versed in hawaiian language, culture, storytelling and able to share with the audience his 25 years of experience with the band, called me up to ask me if I would be available to assist with music and singing. And he's Japanese too...I've been a member of the Royal Hawaiian Band mens Glee Club over two years now and have seen Mr. Nakasone progressed not only as a bandmaster, learning the songs, but his personality and humbleness towards everyone. He's learned a lot about us, those few who are hawaiian and we've had the privilege to share all of it with him. With a band that's known the world over, and with no bandmember being hawaiian, but a bandmaster that gives his all to learning everything that he needs to know, I would strongly consider Mr. Michael

Nakasone to be the bandmaster for the Royal Hawaiian Band. He has my full support. There are those who may seem to think less of him because of his ethnicity. I thought at first but was mistaken. In 1925, Frank Vierra became the bandmaster of the Hawai'i County Band and it achieved great recognition under his leadership. He strengthened the group and built it to 56 players. When they played for the 4th of July races in Hilo and Honolulu in the mid-20's, the Hawai'i County Band was said to rival the Royal Hawaiian Band in excellence. Vierra left Hilo in 1933 to lead the Royal Hawaiian Band. Guess what? He was Portuguese..In conclusion, if I were to select a person for this position, I would not choose him because of his race especially in this day and age. Who would've ever thought that the United States of America would have a black President? With that, I would like to thank you council for this opportunity to share my "mana'o" (thoughts) with you.

Mahalo Nui Loa

Ka'imi Keohokalole